

# critical digest

VOL. V No. 1

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

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## New York Openings This Week

Seagulls Over Serronte-Gelden, 9/11/52. Charles Bowden and Phillip Langer presents new comedy by Hugh Hastings. All male cast includes J. Pat. O'Malley, John Randolph and Leslie Nielsen, staged by Charles Bowden. London production new in its third year.

## Summer Season Finale

A winter of friendly, cooperative planning by summer theatre producers suggested by Rice, Pest, to save many tears next summer. Drama editor reminds strawhat producers that unless they work to drag customers into their barns, summer theatre will die. An exchange of productions between playhouses within an area, more lightweight comedy, and more gimmicks are needed, he concluded...Cooperative system also recommended by Richard Aldrich, Cape Cod producer, to Variety. Unusual aspect of his summer season was fact that Aldrich suffered no stagehand union trouble, mostly because union members were fully employed in TV...Seventh Annual Summer Theatre Honor Roll of Rice, Pest, includes: Beatrice Lillie, Carol Bruce, Bob Shaver, Jean de Marrais, Joseph King, Ken Bloomer, Peter Lorre, Charles Mooney, Faye Emerson, Rea John, Earl Dawson, Richard Hughes.

## Barn Tryouts

The Children's Hour, revival of Lillian Hellman's 1935 hit presented at Putnam, NY, by Jill Miller, won approval of McDonald, Billboard, as a good bet for Broadway. Kermit Bloomgarten plans Broadway production this fall, lead role played by Virginia Kaye, Bloomgarten's wife. Script remains alive...The Cat in the Cage-comedy drama by Howard Richardson and Frances Goforth presented at Atlantic City, NJ, has many high spots but needs much work before Broadway could be considered, notes Walk, Variety.

## New Theatres or New Plays

"Compromise" of both comfortable new theatres and good new plays offered by Watts, Pest, to those battling on various sides of the new theatre building code dispute. Theatre going habit must be brought back so people will go to theatre regularly, instead of just trying to see top hits. Critic does not particularly care for bars in theatre, but he would like to see some new theatres that are comfortable, roomy and without crowded exits. Coleman, Mirror, doubts if new building code should allow bars or smoking, because too many theatre goers resent both indulgences. Coleman predicts that 1952-53 season will be terrific, urging investors to think of new theatre buildings. John Golden contributed \$1,000 to assist young writers, believing it is plays not playhouses that are needed.

## 7:00 PM Monday Curtain Starts

Nine shows begin 7:00 PM Monday curtains. Newspaper ads mark these participating in the theatre experiment with a star. Herald Tribune editorial praises effort of producers, instituted by Richard Rodgers, for it indicates that theatre is at last beginning to take some note of the play goer's comfort and convenience. Next step should be to revise the building code, and to return the box office to the people. With all this accomplished and ticket prices brought down, eventually new and exciting plays will appear.

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' Cumulative NYC Ratings '  
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D - Daily

W - Weekly

M - Monthly

B - Broadcast

DT - NY Times  
DH - NY Herald Tribune  
DN - NY News  
DM - NY Mirror  
DC - NY Compass  
DP - NY Post  
DJ - NY Journal American  
DW - NY World Tele-Sun  
DB - Brooklyn Eagle  
DL - L.I. Press

DJC - Journal of Commerce  
DWJ - Wall Street Journal  
DWW - Women's Wear  
WB - Billboard  
WV - Variety  
WCD - Critical Digest  
WGN - George Jean Nathan  
WWM - Ward Morehouse  
BC - WCBS Bill Leonard  
BL - New Leader - WEVD

WCM - Chr. Science Monitor  
WC - Commonwealth  
WCU - Cue  
WN - Nation  
WNR - New Republic  
WNS - Newsweek  
WNY - New Yorker  
WSR - Saturday Review  
WT - Time  
MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51

PROS: 19 CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY  
NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR

GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50

PROS: 29 CON: WN

THE KING AND I-3/29/51

PROS: 29 CON: WN

THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52

PROS: 27 NONE: WGN MP WNR

THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51

PROS: 26 CON: WCD WGN NONE: WN MP

MRS. McTHING-2/20/52

PROS: 20 CON: DM DJ BC BL WNR WT WGN NONE: WNR MP

PAL JOEY-1/3/52

PROS: 25 CON: BL NONE: WNR

NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52

PROS: 25 CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR

A NIGHT IN VENICE-6/26/52

PROS: 20 CON: DC WSR NONE: WGN WNR BC WT MP

POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51

PROS: 25 CON: DW BL WN WNR WT

SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49

PROS: 29 CON: WT

TOP BANANA-11/1/51

PROS: 23 CON: DP DJ BL NONE: WCM WN WNR WSR

WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52

PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL

NONE: DWW WCD WGN BC WCM WN WNR MP

CON: DT DH DM DP DJ DW DWJ WB WWM WC WCU WNS WNY WSR  
WT

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' Vaudeville '  
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Alice Ghostley, New Faces of 1952, playing two week engagement at Blue Angel... Neel Coward will sing at Walderf Astoria's Empire Room this winter...Dennis James heads new Palace show...Elliott Murphy's Aquashew extended another week...A Night in Havana producer, Michael Rose, auditioning talent following final performance daily at Holiday...Radio City revue Iridescence enters sixth week, with "Ivanhoe" on screen... Louis Armstrong and Gordon Jenkins orchestras start second week at Paramount with "The Crimson Pirate" on screen.

Rexy show, headlined by Mel Terme and Elliot Reed, won approval of trade paper reviewers. "What Price Glory" on screen. Ice show also applauded. Quinn, Mirror, agreed...Smith, Billboard, and Quinn, Mirror, raved over double stage bill at Paramount. Former called it tremendous entertainment wallop, latter tabbed it exciting display that might generate resurgence of jazz band craze...Widely diverse views reported on Holiday's A Night in Havana revue, with "Oriental Evil" on screen. Jese, Variety, thought Tony Carlyle revue moved from Five O'Clock Club, Miami, was a worth while one hour show, but that it had been stretched with not enough dialogue to hang show together. But Quinn, Mirror, found it a terribly display of frenetic dances in colorful costume...House band leader Jo Lombardi of Palace saluted by Quinn, Mirror, for turning out standard musical backgrounding that is uniformly excellent.

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' Green Room Department '  
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**THEATRE RECIPES...**Add another set of suggestions for increasing theatre attendance.

Mackey Theatre Ticket Agency's Louis Schenck would like group of ticket brokers to finance plays, Variety reports...George Jean Nathan wonders if the frankfurter might not do for the theatre, what hot pepper did for movies...Hawkins, WT&S, wants more exaggeration of life onstage, and less depressing and realistic dramas.

**EMPIRE OBITS...**Sad news that 60 year old Empire Theatre will be scrapped next June shouldn't be taken as the final death of legitimate theatre, points out World Telegram & Sun and Herald Tribune editorials. Both papers urge support of new building code which would allow building of new, comfortable theatres. Watts, Pest, would rather see Empire torn down than transferred into a third run film monstrosity like the New Amsterdam.

**COLUMN TIPS...**See the Jaguar might be the season's Drama Critics Circle prize winner, hears Winchell...Summer theatre business so bad, quips Walker, that some playhouses are being reconverted into barns...New Broadway musical already in production still \$40,000 short, whispers Eaton...Robert Cummings still angry at a NY reviewer who panned him in Faithfully Yours reports Sebel. Watts, Pest, thinks he is the man.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...**Bad as drama critics say TV is, it keeps NY actors housed, cleaned and fed, notes Chapman, News...Drama should be judged by emotions, not the mind, reminds Burr, Playbill, to viewers who disagree with facts presented onstage...Equity should be congratulated for suspending its ruling against alien actors, praises Watts, Pest.

**MAIL BOX...**"I have in my head and half on paper, a play," a reader writes Chapman, News. And the critic comments "That ain't enough, Bud."...Irish readers of Watts, Pest, inform him that "U" in Abbey Player U. Wright, stands for Udelphus.. Herald Tribune reader admits she stopped going to theatre two years ago after seeing a set of miserable plays. She would return if plays presented real people in real situations.

**INTERVIEW HI LITES...**Wish You Were Here co-producer Joshua Logan will never again open a show "cold" in NY, he admitted to Merehouse, WT&S. Next show will try out in mid-country. With preview system, everybody and his brother becomes a critic. Producer finds reviews by Nerton, Boston Pest, helpful. Actually Logan agreed with pan notices filed by first nighters, which resulted in rewriting of book.

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' Theatre News Roundup '  
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Gilbert Gabriel, Cue drama critic and president of NY Drama Critics Circle, died following recent heart attack. Shipley, New Leader, becomes head of reviewers' group. Mrs. McThing reopens...Hebe, Variety, writing weekly Broadway column for Nassau, LI, Review Star...Critics' wives considered by the anonymous Spelvin, Theatre Arts... Vivienne Segal returned to Pal Jeey...Barry Nelson returned to The Moon Is Blue, Barbara Bel Geddes set to return October 1st...Gertrude Lawrence, The King and I, bedded with poison ivy, Constance Carpenter subbing...Bob Dixon subbed for Jack Cassidy, Wish You Were Here, on Labor Day performances...Fred Baker, News copy boy, signed for Bernardine...American Theatre Wing School fall term opens September 10th...American Academy of Theatre Arts moving to ANTA Playhouse...Show of Month to open "Show Shop" in Dallas...State Department aiding Porgy and Bess by providing transportation to Europe.



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' Fall Drama Schedule - Tentative Dates '  
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SEPTEMBER: Seagulls Over Sorrento-See Page 1 for Details...Mr. Pickwick-Plymouth 9/17/52. Playwrights' Company first production of season. Stanley Young's adaptation of Dickens' "Pickwick Papers" staged by John Burrell, with Estelle Winwood and George Howe...Frankie & Johnny-Theatre de Lys, 9/29/52. Opening of Greenwich Village theatre club. Adaptation of folk tale by John Huston with music.

OCTOBER: The Sacred Flame-President, 10/6/52. Somerset Maugham's play revived as first subscription play of American Contemporary Theatre Series...The Millionairess Shubert, 10/9/52. Theatre Guild production of George Bernard Shaw play with Katharine Hepburn, Cyril Ritchard and Robert Helpmann...The Gambler-Lyceum, 10/13/52. Thomas Hammend presents Alfred Drake and Edward Eager's adaptation of Italian drama by Ugo Betti, starring Drake...In Any Language-Cert, 10/14/52. Jule Styne and George Abbett present new comedy by Edmund Beloin and Henry Garson...The Time of the Cuckee-Empire, 10/15/52. Robert Whitehead presents new play by Arthur Laurents, starring Shirley Booth, directed by Herman Shumlin...Bernardine-Playhouse, 10/16/52. Produced and directed by Guthrie McClintic, new play by Mary Chase with Irene Hervey and Johnny Stewart...Gilbert and Sullivan Repertoire-Hellinger, 10/20/52. S.M.Charteck presents company headed by Martyn Green...Buttrick Square-Century, 10/23/52. Genwood Productions presents new musical by General Genevieve and Billy Gilbert, score by Jones and Stamer. Director Dale Wasserman. Cast includes Billy Gilbert and Lawrence Brooks...My Darlin' Aida-Winter Garden, 10/27/52. Robert Joseph presents "modern musical" based on Verdi's opera. Hassard Short is director...Dial 'M' for Murder-9/29/52. London hit mystery by Frederick Knott, starring Maurice Evans.

NOVEMBER: The Deep Blue Sea-Meresco. Alfred de Liagre, Jr, presents new play by Terrence Rattigan, starring Margaret Sullivan...Jezebel's Husband-Roger Stevens, William Fields and Hume Cronyn present Robert Nathan's new play, starring Claude Rains...I've Got Sixpence-Gertrude Macy and Walter Starke production of John van Druten's new play...See the Jaguar-Lemuel Ayers and Whitfield Cook present new play by N. Richard Nash, which will star Arthur Kennedy...Two's Company-Russe, Ellis & Hayman present new revue by Charles Sherman, starring Bette Davis...Seven Year Itch-Courtney Burr and Elliott Nugent present George Axelrod's new comedy...Be Your Age-Joseph Kipness and Alexander Cohen present new comedy by Reginald Denham and Mary Orr, starring Conrad Nagel...The Hellow-Agatha Christie mystery presented by Shubert Brothers...An Evening with Beatrice Lillie-Edward Duryea Dewling presents Miss Lillie and Reginald Gardiner.

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' Legit Stuff '  
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League of NY Theatres and Scenic Artists Union have agreed on arbitration of future disputes on importing foreign-made scenery...St.John Terrell, Music Circus producer, wed Elrita Bartholemew...Milwaukee and St.Paul theatre drives by Council of Living Theatre proving successful.

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